United Nations E/2016/NGO/82

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
24 May 2016

Original: English

2016 session
24 July 2015-27 July 2016
Agenda item 5
High-level segment

Statement submitted by Youth Alliance for Leadership and Development in Africa, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

In light of this year's theme, "Ensuring that no one is left behind", we would first like to highlight the growing number of Africa's youth population. Africa's young population is rapidly increasing and thus, young people must be key players in the development process.

Investing in Africa's youth is absolutely vital and entirely crucial. Within this realm, governments and civil society need to be instrumental in equipping youth with the tools they need to succeed. This must be translated through the mobilization of social and economic resources that are accessible to all youth in the continent.

When ensuring that the youth of Africa are not left behind so that they can be instrumental in present and future developments, we must guarantee that legislation and comprehensive policies consider the challenges and obstacles faced by youth. Access to high quality basic and secondary education for all youth is imperative. An educated population can fully participate in combating societal ills, as well as finding innovative ways to build the economy. Youth must be included in employment so that they can generate income that will create a sustainable livelihood. Access to healthcare and safety must be a basic necessity for all youth as a population must be healthy and secure to be productive.

It is important that when we consider youth, the poorest youth and children from marginalized households have to be included as well. Those that lack basic necessities must not be left behind.

It is our view that responsibility lies on a number of stakeholders. African youth have a responsibility to speak up and address the issues and challenges they face. They must be instrumental and active within this process, so that they make strides in sustainable development. National governments have the responsibility to truly listen to these youth and their challenges, and then follow up with an integrated development process. Civil society must play an active role in using bottom up and top down approaches to ensure youth are not left behind in development. The private sector should foster partnerships and promote entrepreneurship so that youth employment is rampant and flourishes.

We commend the Development Cooperation Forum in actively promoting a global dialogue and discussing the global development agenda. Again, African youth engagement and participation in the African development process is vital. Not only will it foster the youth leaders of tomorrow, but it will empower the youth of today to be proactive members in their communities.